

Teenage  
Smoking

### TEENAGE SMOKING

The following is a summary of two reports released by the Government to support their allocation of \$3.1 million on a major strategy to combat teenage smoking outlined in August 1994. The first is prepared by The Open Mind Research Group on behalf of the National Drug Strategy, dated 27 June 1994, and titled "National Drug Strategy - Adolescent Smoking (Qualitative Research Report)". The second a preliminary report prepared by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, dated August 1994, titled "Prevalence of cigarette smoking among Australian secondary school students in 1993".

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#### "National Drug Strategy - Adolescent Smoking (Qualitative Research Report)"

##### **The Open Mind Research Group**

27 June 1994

##### Reasons children smoke

- image of defiance, independence, strength, maturity, control, social sophistication; smoking conveys the image of a person with a sense of fun who is thirsting for life experiences;
- unpleasant side effects associated with initial smoking such as dizziness, nausea, head rushes and coughing are seen as obstacles to overcome;
- define their position in new social structures which are developed in the first year of secondary school when the person is around 12 or 13 years old;
- smoking is associated with teenage stress and the histrionics of teenage years;
- teenagers who do not smoke are in agreement with the adult world.

##### Reasons to stop smoking

- health and fitness;
- smoking no longer conveys the image they seek, ie. they are now in control of their life, or are entering a new phase;

There is universal awareness among young people that smoking is damaging to health and that it is associated with lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease and throat cancer. However, these consequences were not of concern to young smokers as they are too far in the future. The need to belong socially is more important to teenagers.

Cost is an important vulnerability to young smokers

##### Mass Communication

- the cost of cigarettes, limiting smoking in public places, publicity re health risks has all been effective in encouraging adult smokers to quit;
- anti smoking campaigns are, and have been, of little relevance to young people;
- very little marketing, either by the cigarette companies or the anti smoking lobby, has been successfully targeted at the under 25 age group;
- depictions of the health message are most effective at generating a response, which has been to harden the resolve of non smoker;
- the messages on health become more relevant to smokers as they get older;
- television commercials promoting the anti smoking message have limited success;
- hijacking images of smokers and transposing them on non smokers has not been effective;
- no spontaneous association between the anti smoking message and sporting groups;
- young people recognise smoking as anti social in the adult world, but this has not translated into their world.

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In relation to communication strategies to stop children smoking the report recommended:

- distinguishing between the strategies aimed at a) creating barriers to initiation of smoking and b) promoting quitting
- multi level campaigns should be used or both strategies and these would target
  - school based programs,
  - youth directed QUIT programs, and
  - Mass communication expenditure.

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"Prevalence of cigarette smoking among Australian secondary school students in 1993"

(Preliminary Report)

**Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer**

August 1994

This report considered smoking behaviour of secondary school students aged between 12 and 17. Data was compared with that from 1984, 1987, and 1990.

"Smokers" were those who smoked at least once in the preceding 7 days of the survey.

Smokers (1993):

- 8% or 12yo boys and 7% 12yo girls
- 28% 17yo boys, 31% 17 yo girls
- 12 yo smoking daily = negligible
- At 17, 15% boys and 13% girls smoked daily
- At 13 more boys than girls had smoked
- the average no. of cigarettes smoked by "smoker" boys was greater than that for girls
- 12 yo boys smoked 9 cigarettes per week, girls smoked 7
- 17 yo boys smoked 44 per week, girls smoked 32

Comparison with data from other years:

- for all ages the proportion of male students smoking had increased from 1990. The proportion of all age groups of females smoking had either remained the same or increased.
- the proportion of secondary students smoking in 1993 was greater than in 1990
- there does not appear to be a real increase in the prevalence of current smokers among 16 and 17 year olds
- there did not appear to be an increase in "committed" smoking (ie. smoking on three or more days in the week)
- among smokers aged 12 to 15 the average number of cigarettes smoked each week decreased
- among 16 and 17 year olds the average number of cigarettes smoked did not change

In 1993 there were approximately 262 000 secondary students between the ages of 12 to 17 smoking 6 664 100 cigarettes. These figures altered from 1990 where there were 236 000 12 to 17 year olds smoking a total of 6 353 000.

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